lobbying against indecency on TV and in magazines. Several big-time advertisers have cancelled their support of TV programs with an anti-Christian bias. An extensive campaign against 7-Eleven Stores, largest sellers of pornography, is presently having its effect, and in Wildmon's latest mailout Toyota, which advertises in pornographic magazines, is a target. Wildmon asked all of us to both call and write Toyota's president and protest. On my card to him I added the note; "I am now driving a Toyota, but I am waiting to see how you respond to this before I decide to continue driving one of your automobiles." If you want to help get smut and filth (and anti-Christian bias!) off TV, join Wildmon's efforts. He knows where to hit them where it hurts, their pocketbooks! His address: Box 1434, Alexandria, VA 22313.

The day has come when at least some Churches of Christ are comfortable in working with other churches. The Arcadia Church of Christ in Arcadia, Ca. is joining 70 other denominations and Christian groups in a massive witness to the multiplied thousands that will be at the summer Olympics from all over the world. They will house 44 workers in their building as well as join the evangelistic teams.

READERS' EXCHANGE

Thank you so much for sending the requested issues of *Restoration Review!* Now we are sending a volume off to be bound. Perhaps a bound volume will be harder to remove than the single issues have been, for whoever has been helping himself. — *Librarian of a Christian college.*

(Perhaps that is the ultimate in compliments, that one (or several) would want this journal so much as to steal it — and at a Christian college at that! If any person, student or otherwise, desires this paper that much, we will send it to them free. Just write and tell us that you are tempted, and we will provide "a way of escape." In the meantime it might help if all librarians (it is a common problem!) erected a sign that reads *Thou shalt not steal!* Some of the Christian college students might recognize that as from the Bible. — *Ed.*)

The subscription price for this journal is 5.00 a year or two years for 8.00. In clubs of four or more, 3.00 a year for each name. We do all the mailing. Bundle rate (mailed to a single address), 30 cents per copy, minimum of five.

When sending us your change of address, you must give us both your old and new addresses.

Our bound volume, entitled *Jesus Today*, that has all the issues of this journal for 1981 and 1982, is available for 9.50. You will find it a handsome, library-type volume, with dustjacket and table of contents. Earlier volumes are also available in matching sets: *Principles of Unity and Fellowship*, 1977 (5.50); *The Ancient Order*, 1978 (5.50), *Blessed Are the Peacemakers* and *With All the Mind* (double volume, 1979-80) is 9.50 We pay postage if you send check in advance.

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RESTORATION REVIEW

If we watch ourselves honestly, we shall find that we have begun to argue against a new idea even before it has been completely stated. — *Wilfred Trotter*

God offers to every man the choice between truth and repose. Take which you will, you can never have both.
—*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Vol. 26, No. 7 Leroy Garrett, Editor September, 1984

The Doe of the Dawn: A Christian World View. . .

WHAT IS TRUTH?

In a recent editorial in the *Firm Foundation* (Austin, Texas), titled "You and Your Little Bunch," one of the editors defended an exclusivistic view of truth. He saw only two options: either one stands absolutely for what he believes to be truth or he surrenders to a relativism that has no standard for truth. He said in essence that if one is right, the other person, if he holds a different view, has to be wrong.

Since the editor invites responses, I sent him this note: "One does not have to take either extreme position. I believe I am right (if not, I would change), but it does not necessarily follow that I have to believe that everyone else is wrong."

Responding, both in his editorial column and in a letter to me, he wrote: "If in the ten unit system of math, two plus two is four, then two plus two is not one, or two, or three, or five, or six, or seven, or any number other than four. Truth is narrow! If any given thing is true then everything that disagrees with that thing is false. Now, dear brother, if that is incorrect, please tell me wherein it is wrong."

This exchange between two editors reminded me how important one's concept of truth is to his overall world view. The philosophers call this epistemology, which is in itself a vast area of study in the nature of human understanding. *What is truth?, How do we know anything to be true?, How can truth be tested?* These are epistemological questions, and they are vital to all religious inquiry. A philosopher would say that we two editors have reached an epistemological impasse, and that we will have to come to some agreement as to the nature of truth before there can be meaningful dialogue.

We must first determine if there are not different kinds of truth, lest he be referring to one kind of truth and I to another. There are mathematical and scientific truths (or facts), historical truths, poetic truths, and religious truths. There are at least *presumed* truths in these areas, and we might add "common sense" truths, as well as objective and subjective truths. We all know, of course, that even "common sense" can be deceptive. The "dead dog" on the highway ahead of us turns out to be a

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crushed paper bag and the crooked oar in the water an illusion. Truths (or facts) have a way of eluding us, and they do not come as easily and with as much certainty as we may presume.

When my editor friend responds with a mathematical equation, two plus is two is four, what is he doing? He is implying that his religious views (which is the issue at hand) are in the same category with the certainty of matthematical logic. Yes, of course, he is right that in mathematics if one contradicts the formula two plus two is four, he would be wrong, while the one who affirms it would be right, and that here we have an absolute or an exclusivistic truth.

But even here we must be careful. If a child has two apples and you give him two more, and then ask him how many apples he has, and he says *three*, he would be right! He might have more than three, but he does have three.

This is why my editor friend is wrong when he says, "If any given thing is true then everything that disagrees with that thing is false." Not quite! Suppose he and I are sitting in his office and there are knocks at his door. He says, "That's Mary at the door," and I say, "It is Jane." We disagree. Our statements are contrary. But we could *both* be right. Mary and Jane could both be at the door! Only if I *contradicted* him (not merely spoke contrary) by saying, "It is *not Mary*," would one of us have to be wrong. But even then we could *both* be wrong! Many a time have men had contradictory views of Scripture and *both* be wrong. But if they do contradict each other, where one position exludes the other, they cannot *both* be right — but, and it is a cruel logic, they could both be wrong!

My editor friend is guilty of a harmful fallacy when he transfers questions about religion, which is based on revelation, to the area of mathematics, which is an exact science. No one questions such a formula as two plus two is four. There is no interpreting to be done. It is sometimes called *apriori* knowledge in that it is accepted as fact apart from testing it by experience. Only a moron would argue with such mathematical propositions.

Are the differences that the editor has with his Baptist and Methodist neighbors in that category? Obviously not, for we have equally sincere and equally intelligent people who interpret the recognized source of truth (the Bible) differently. The difference between two plus two is four, where there is no disagreement, and religion is that religion (or the Bible, its source) has to be interpreted.

The editor no doubt believes that he interprets the Bible correctly while others do not, which makes him right (and only him!) and others wrong. But at least he should be able to see that his interpretations of the Bible are not in the same category with the formula two plus two is four, if for no other reason that everyone agrees with his math but not with his religion.

Religious truths are not an exact science, not even when in the hands of Church of Christ editors!

Religion and math differ in that math is to be accepted, *apriori*, while religion is to be believed. One is science, the other is revelation. One is knowledge, which is what science means, while the other is faith. To equate religious truth with mathematical truth is to miss the point of religion. If religious propositions, such as *Jesus is Lord* or *Jesus was born of a virgin,* could be proved or demonstrated like math or science, then there would be no disbelievers. There would be no religion, for it would all be science. God does not ask us to *know*, like in math, but to *believe*, like in religion.

Math is based on exact formulae, while religion is based on evidence, as given in God's disclosure of Himself, which constitutes the holy Scriptures. Some accept the evidence and some do not. Those who do we call believers. This is entirely different from math. There are no *believers* in math, only knowers. Simple trusting faith is the tissue of religion, not mathematics or science.

I am not saying in all this that God's disclosure of Himself in the Bible is a hodgepodge of mystery that cannot be understood. There is general agreement among believers on the basic truths of the Christian faith, and unanimous agreement on what the Bible actually says. And here we must distinguish between revelation and interpretation. Revelation is what the Scriptures actually say (here we agree), while interpretation is what we think it means by what it says (here we often disagree).

And let's not have the asinine response, "It means what it says," for very often the Bible does not at all mean what it says (such as "If your eye offends you, pluck it out"), and at other times we have to ask (if it means what it says), "But what does it say?"

But I am saying that the Bible is a difficult book that needs to be in the hands of a responsible teacher. It needs to be taught, to be interpreted, and that is not easy to do right. It was not without reason that God placed teachers in the church.

But the problem with the *Firm Foundation* editor goes beyond these matters, for when he speaks of being right he is not referring to the general truths of the faith upon which most Christians agree. He is speaking, or so I understand, of those things unique to the Church of Christ. His concerns relate largely to things concerning which the Scriptures are silent, such as instrumental music. In the same issue in which he responds to my note, another writer addresses the question of instrumental music and says this: "All New Testament references to music in New Testament scriptures carry the words singing, song, or songs. In context, this means, 'Don't play!'"

This illustrates where we are with our good brothers who suppose that if they are right everyone else has to be wrong. The church everywhere around the world would agree that the New Testament speaks of singing, song, and songs. But only a tiny minority, the non-instrument Churches of Christ and a few other small churches, would conclude that those Scriptures mean "Don't play!" That is sheer assumption. If those verses about singing clearly mandated, *Don't play*, then the church at large would not use instruments, for most believers seek to do what the Bible clearly teaches.

This was the area of "truth" I had in view when I wrote to the editor and suggested that one can believe he is right without believing that everyone else is wrong. I was not of course referring to the basic, absolute truths of the Christian faith, but to those areas of opinion where convictions sometimes run deep. I belong to a non-instrument Church of Christ, and I believe we are right when we sing acappella, but I can believe that without believing that those who use an instrument are sinning against God. We could both be right in such areas of opinion. Our positions are not contradictory, but only contrary, as illustrated above. But the *Firm Foundation* insists that they are contradictory, which means that if singing acappella is right, instrumental singing has to be wrong. But my editor friend must see that what is wrong to him (being a violation of his conscience) is not necessarily wrong for someone else. If he has trouble with this, he only needs to realize that there are those to his *right* (those more conservative than he) who believe he is wrong in still other areas of opinions and methods, such as maintaining an organized Sunday School or using a plurality of cups for Communion. Or on the interpretation of prophecy or speaking in tongues or the nature of inspiration, etc., etc.

So surely in the area of opinions and methods, and this is where the differences are, my proposition will hold up: *One can believe he is right without having to believe that everyone else is wrong.*

The nature of truth, especially in reference to our standing with God, goes deeper than all this, for truth is not always as "narrow" as the *Firm Foundation* would insist. It may be all right to refer to truth as narrow, but not all right to pass judgment on who walks within those narrow confines and who does not. If "walking in the truth" were likened to scaling a high mountain, we would need to see that we are all at different levels along the way, with none of us ever reaching the top or even near the top since the search for truth never ends. If my editor friend is plodding along the mountain trail at a high altitude, it does not follow that he is more loyal to the truth than those far below him, for there are so many factors to be considered, such as time, opportunity, abilities, obstacles.

It is the truth-*seeker* that God blesses, not necessarily the truth-*finder*. The prophets expressed the principle that stands through all ages: *Seek God and live!* (Amos 5:4). Thank God, we do not have to be righteous to be blessed, but to hunger and thirst for righteousness (Mt. 5:6). Our Lord promises that "he who comes to me I will not cast out" (Jn. 6:37), and it

is just as well that we not try to judge who has come to him and who has not, for in coming to him some may stand at a distance while others are closer. His grace reaches out to *all* who come and by that grace they edge closer and closer to him.

So, those who are the closest to God may not necessarily be those who have scaled the mountain to a high altitude, as blessed as they are, but those with a broken-spirit who struggle at the foot of the mountain seeking the path that leads upward. While there is the promise that those who seek will find, we all know it takes time. If one is *seeking* God he has life (that is the promise), and God will lead him home so long as he continues his quest. God has the sincere seeker on radar, and He will bring him in safely.

That is where we should all be, *seekers* and not so much finders, for when we find some truth the search for more truth accelerates. The ultimate (and only absolute?) truth is God himself as manifest in Jesus Christ our Lord. Only Jesus could say, *I am the truth.* That is because he reflected the image of Him who is Truth itself. As to who among men draw nigh unto that Truth is not for us to judge. Perhaps it is little children in their innocence or those whom men judge to be "sinners" who stand apart and cry out, "God, be merciful to me a (really *the*) sinner."

As for the lesser (but still important) truths concerning which we may disagree, let us be as wise as the old British bishop who dared to urge, "Realize by the bowels of Christ that you might be wrong!" One with that disposition of heart is probably more "right" than those who are "righter." — *the Editor*

DO WE HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH BEING SAVED?

A brother in Christ in nearby Fort Worth, Tommy J. Hicks, has an article in the July 10 *Firm Foundation* titled "Salvation by Grace Only," a proposition that he rejects. He tells of a conversation with a Church of Christ minister who told him, "In spite of years of negative, legalistic, guilt-trip preaching, I discovered GRACE!" He quotes the preacher as going on to say, "I had absolutely nothing to do with my own salvation!" Brother Hicks is alarmed that preachers who hold such views sometimes minister even in "conservative" churches.

While I see reason for brother Hicks' concern, especially with the view that a man has "absolutely nothing" to do with his salvation, his essay may raise more questions than it answers. If he questions the doctrine of salvation by grace only, what would he add to grace? Is he implying that one is saved by works also? The Scriptures make it clear again and again that we are *not* saved by works. On this point the Scriptures even affirm: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Tit. 3:5). If one is not saved even by *righteous* deeds, then surely he cannot be saved by any deeds at all.

Our brother says that one is saved by obeying the gospel, not by grace only. Does the fact that one is to obey the gospel negate the proposition of salvation by grace only? What is the gospel but "the gospel of the grace of God"? That one must make a response to the grace that God bestows does not indicate that there is anything involved but God's grace and mercy.That I accept God's grace (in ways God has determined) cannot mean that something is added to grace — as if grace were not sufficient.

When brother Hicks questions the proposition that there is absolutely nothing one can do with his own salvation, his case appears stronger. But it may be a matter of semantics. When the preacher was describing his liberation from legalism by finding grace, he might be excused for overstating his case. I wonder if brother Hicks would have objected if the preacher had said this instead: "There was absolutely nothing that I did or could do that would merit or earn or gain for me my salvation." That is almost certainly what he meant. He could hardly have meant that he had no responsibility to respond to the grace of God in faith and obedience. Yet he must have meant that even his obedience (in baptism) did not itself save him, for it was God's grace, *only* God's grace. And if that is what he meant, I agree with him.

Our Fort Worth brother takes a position that has hung as an albatross over Churches of Christ all these years: "Grace is extended by God and it is received by faith. Thus, one can see God's part and man's part in salvation."

It may be all right to speak of "man's part" in salvation if we mean only that man is to make a faithful response to what God has done. But even here it is not what we believe or do that saves us. It is only what God has done for us through Christ that saves us. There is no "Man's part" if we mean there is something we do that *procures* salvation.

This doctrine of "God's part and man's part" has misled our people to an exaggerated view of baptism. Many of our people presume they are saved by being baptized. While there is surely some symbolic sense in which it can be said that "baptism saves us," as 1 Pet. 3:21 states (though the same verse disclaims any cleansing power in the act itself), we must avoid

any conclusion that makes baptism a work whereby we are put right with God. We have already noted from Paul's own words that even *righteous* deeds cannot save us. And that is what we have done to many of our people (but not all), for they see baptism as a righteous work, ordained of God, whereby they are saved. It is thus "their part" of being saved. But this stands in awful contrast to the apostle's grand propositions: (1) one is justified by grace as a free gift (Rom. 3:24); (2) to the one who works, his wages are not reckoned as a free gift but as his due (Rom. 4:4).

This is why I cannot view baptism as a righteous work. I agree with Alexander Campbell, who championed the place of baptism as much as anyone, that baptism is a work of God's grace. It is not something that we *do*, but something that God does to us. The command to be baptized is in the middle voice rather than the active. Baptism is done to us by God, by His Spirit. Col. 2:12 not only identifies baptism as "the working of God" but as a circumcision not made with hands, a circumcision of the heart.

This is why Campbell insisted that baptism can never be viewed as a *procuring* act but rather as a *confirming* act (on God's part). We are saved by grace through faith, as Eph. 2:8 says, and this is confirmed by God when we submit to baptism as "the answer of a good conscience toward God" (1 Pet. 3:21). This is why baptism is never referred to as regeneration in the Bible, but as the *washing* or the *bath* of regeneration (Tit. 3:5).

There is surely some sense in which baptism is for the remission of sin, or Acts 2:38 would not read as it does, but it is clearly not for the remission of sins in an absolute sense or in every sense. Again I will follow Campbell and say that in baptism our sins are *formally* (not *actually*) washed away or forgiven. But in view of Acts 2:38, as well as other passages, we can say that baptism as a command of God is necessary for the *formal* remission of sins. That is why there should be no such thing as an unbaptized Christian. But, to use Campbell again, baptism is the formal culmination of the regenerative process, the *bath* of regeneration, which begins as a free gift of God at the point of faith. Thus Campbell said, both early and late in his ministry: "One is *really* saved when he believes, *formally* saved when he is baptized."

Alexander Campbell's balanced view of baptism would prove helpful to the modern church, not only to his own heirs among Christian Churches-Churches of Christ, but to the church generally. If some of us have made too much of baptism, exalting it to an act of regeneration, others have made too little of it, divorcing it completely from the regenerative process and making it no more than a way to join a denomination.

But getting back to brother Hicks' article, he concludes by saying: "Only when one hears the gospel of God's grace, believes the gospel of God's grace, and obeys the gospel of God's grace, will one be saved by God's grace." Within the context of what I have said herein *I buy that,*

and that is why the preacher that upset brother Hicks goes too far when he says he had absolutely nothing to do with his salvation.

But our Fort Worth brother may have been insensitive to his friend's greatest need, *to be understood, lovingly understood.* Tired of legalism and guilt-trip preaching, his friend had found liberation in the grace of God. Trying to make it on his own proved too much for him, so he at last caught the vision of salvation by grace apart from works, which sparked the great Protestant Reformation. And once one sees the glorious truth that it is, after all, God's free gift, life is never the same again. And the Scriptures do say, again and again, that salvation is God's free gift to us, a truth that we allow to pass us by.

A free gift! Glory be! When one sees that, he can be forgiven if in his exhilaration he overstates his case.

So brother Hicks needs to encourage his preacher friend. I am sending him an extra copy of this essay in hopes that he will pass it along to him, so he can see that he by no means stands alone in his quest for God's glorious grace, not even among Churches of Christ. — *the Editor*

Travel Letter and Things Personal —

THIS IS MY TASK

It is amazing how the fabric of a single day in one's life can be woven with both triumph and tragedy. In fact Sunday, June 3, 1984 would qualify as one of the most exciting days of my life. I had arrived in San Salvador two days earlier and was a guest in the home of Andrew and Kathy Fuller and their three young children. The drive from the airport gave little indication that I was in a nation at war, save soldiers along the way who were gurading various bridges and installations. As to whether one is safe in San Salvador depends on whom you ask. My hosts were calm and relaxed and moved about the city with the same sense of security as they would back home in the United States, or so it seemed. But in my short sojourn there I did not see a single tourist, and the U. S. Embassy tells our people to stay off the streets.

Since my host, an army officer, works with the Embassy, he goes first class. His almost-palatial home is owned by the widow of a former ambassador to the U.S., and a painting of her graces one of the walls. The several homes where I was a guest were actually small compounds in that they were completely walled in and secured. The spacious, tiered yard abounded with colorful flowers which bloom all year, including orchids. There was a variety of trees: coconut, lemon, orange, banana, grapefruit, and even avocado. All this was completely walled in, private, secure, and cozy.

We dined around an unusually large teak dining table and told Bible stories to the children. I studied "the Duchess on the wall," wondering what kind of life she lived in her little mansion. The fact that her husband was killed as so many Salvadorian political figures are may indicate that her life was not unlike the quiet desperation I saw etched in her beautiful face and disciplined figure.

A Saturday visit to the Embassy was ideal since only guards were on duty. From the roof of the multi-storied structure one gets a panoramic view of a city that appears peaceful, nestled as it is in a valley surrounded by mountains. From that persepctive one can hardly muse, "I look unto the mountains from whence cometh my help," for in those mountains lurked some 12,000 Communist guerillas, a continual threat to tiny El Salvador. Our Embassy there is of course the nerve center of our efforts in Central America. I thought of our nation's ordeal in Iran as I walked about the walled-in, heavily guarded Embassy. I noted that the ambassador's suite is secured by additional locks and gates in the event an intruder should get as far as his office on the top floor.

There was mild excitement at one point when the guards manned their stations with machine guns and rifles drawn. I did not have time to ponder what it would be like to get caught in an Embassy take-over, for an official quickly explained that it was back-fire from a passing truck. San Salvador may be safe but it is nervous. I checked in particular to see if terrorists could crash the gates with a vehicle laden with explosives. No way.

It is at the Embassy of course that visas are issued to Salvadorians wishing to visit the United States, except that all that many are not issued. To receive a visa one must be able to prove that he has compelling reasons to return home, such as money in the bank or title to property. Otherwise many would migrate and never return. One big difference between "the land of the free and the home of the brave" is that we have to build walls to keep out while some other nations build walls to keep people in.

My host also took me to a Salvadorian army training center where we "worked out" within its protective confines. Even through I am somewhat older than he, I joined him in a two-mile run around the track, which may have surprised him. As I watched cadets doing calisthenics I spoke of the tragedy of their being trained to wage war against their own countrymen, even though I understood why. My host pointed to the grim fact that a high percentage of those boys would soon die in the conflict. The reality of that disturbed me as I watched them play their games, so full of life and each with loving parents destined to a baptism of grief.

The Union Church of San Salvador is an independent, English-speaking Christian congregation with an impressive edifice of Spanish architecture, and walled-in of course. It includes comfortable quarters for the pastor, and it supports itself in part through a gift shop on the premises. I was to be in its pulpit through three Sundays with varied assignments through the week. I spoke on the grace of God, which was warmly received by Salvadorians and Americans alike, a number of them visitors from Tennessee, doctors and dentists on their way to mission stations to do acts of mercy. I had a delightful visit with them afterwards, beautiful people.

When one sits in their simple but spacious "sanctuary," he sees the huge volcanic mountain through the glass wall behind the pulpit, which a curtain hides from view (because of the glare) when the minister speaks. I told them it was the first time ever that I had preached with a volcano behind me, but that I had been in more dangerous situations! It was a delightful service. I was especially pleased to preside at the Table as we all broke bread together. But I also enjoyed teaching the Sunday School class which met out on the veranda, which was excitingly biblical. I could tell that the people were hungry for basic Christian teaching.

Union Church impressed me as being the way churches should be. They were simply the "gathered church," and no one bothered with denominational labels. It was no denomination, though various denominations must have been represented. They didn't care what I was and I didn't care what they were. We were all believers or becoming-believers. We met in Christ's name and we studied the holy Scriptures. We broke bread together. We were church, that's all. We lingered long, visiting. I loved it. It was one of the greatest experiences of my life.

A garden dinner that afternoon with Embassy people was a most unique experience, for I was able to visit with various levels of military, political, and diplomatic officials, and even a woman reporter. I had been reading about the problems of Central America, so I was full of questions. Is Nicaragua lost for good to the free world? *Yes.* Can El Salvador be saved? *Yes,* assuming that President Duarte can have even a moderately successful reign and that the U.S. will follow the recommendations of the Kissinger committee report. The death squads? *Yes,* of course, they are real and on *both* sides, which is the nature of war, which is dirty business both ways, as in Vietnam or any other war. Are we morally right to be involved? *Yes,* if you believe in freedom and democracy. But obviously the

Communists see it differently. Does the press tend to be left-wing and critical of our role and is their reporting biased? *Yes*, for while what they report may be true, they select what they want to report. When the Communists blow up a hospital, killing and wounding innocent people, little is made of it. When American-backed Salvadorians do something like that, such as the murder of the nuns, it is a big deal.

While we talked a little child fell into the swimming pool behind me, and was of course immediately fished out. The best I can ascertain it was very near the time our little Christi was drowning back home. I have no psychic powers. I had no premonition. I was deeply involved in exciting and informative conversation with important people and I did not even think of home, though I am always saying to myself amdist my travels that I wish Ouida could be with me.

After some difficulty Ouida at last reached me at the Andrews home on into the night. From the garden dinner I had gone to a missionary's home for further fellowship. The veteran missionary had a different view of things. Central America will not be saved by guns and bullets but by the nations turning to Christ, which they are now doing by the tens of thousands. The time will come when the guerillas will come out of the mountains and lay down their arms *because of the Prince of Peace.* But the missionary did a strange thing. As we walked out on the terrace overlooking the lighted city below us he began talking about how the heavenly Father loves children, of how in His great compassion He embraces His little ones. I had no idea of course that my precious little granddaughter was already with that loving Father and that Ouida was trying to contact me. It was as if the aged missionary had some premonition and was preparing me for the most devastating experience (by far) of my life.

I froze when Ouida told me that she had some very sad news. I knew it was not her aged mother who lives with us. There was no way for me to be prepared for what she told me. One of the grandest days of my life prefaced the most agonizing night of my life. I had the feeling that I simply could not bear it. I was in the home of virtual strangers, but because of our mutual love for Christ I found solace in their loving concern. Word quickly spread among the Union Church, who gathered in homes to pray for me. When word reached the Embassy people, they assured me that they could get me on the morning flight to the States, booked solid. In order to get home I had to accept their offer.

On the way to the airport the next morning I confided to the Andrews that in my delirium during the night I asked God to speak to me (through a tongue, a child, a dream or vision, anyway!) and tell me that He had taken Christi. That was the one way I thought I could stand it. But there was nothing. As I gained some control of my faculties I asked

God to forgive me for such a request, for He has already spoken to me all He needs to, *through His Son and through the holy prophets and apostles.* Along with His suffering love I only needed time for healing, and that would come.

But Kathy Andrews came through with one that gave me the laughter I badly needed: *Leroy, God doesn't speak to Church of Christ people!* 'I told her that I envy folk who are always hearing the voice of God. He even tells some folk, so they tell me, where to find a parking space.

The Andrews were so kind that they called ahead to Houston, where I changed planes, and informed the Bering Dr. Church of Christ of my problem, who had my dear friend, Charles Turner, at the airport to be with me until I flew on to DFW, where I was met by Weldon Bowling of our Denton church. We are sometimes idiots, aren't we? I was hoping that Weldon would tell me it was all a joke, a cruel joke, and that I would find Christi at home with Ouida. I had him take me by the funeral home first of all. They had just received the body from the morgue, following the autopsy, and I questioned them about a bad scar on her left side, caused by a vicious burn. I was hoping they would tell me that there was no such scar on the child they had. My last irrational hope faded when the mortician told me that *yes*, he had noticed the scar. Deep grief can drive one to the edge of insanity.

Ouida and I had much of ourselves invested in that little girl who would turn four this summer, and she herself had suffered far more than any little child should. Ouida nursed her through several serious illnesses, some of them beside her bed in the hospital. The worst ordeal was when her gown caught fire, resulting in second and third degree burns. This called for weeks of meticulous nursing, in and out of the hospital. By the time we lost her she was with us nearly all the time. Her mother would take her on weekends in order to give Ouida a rest. On that Sunday afternoon she followed a dog (they think) to a distant tank. The sheriff reported that he found her little footprints leading directly into the water, as if in pursuit of the dog she had been playing with.

Her paternal grandfather, who lives next door at the farm, joined the frantic search to find her, and he was soon at the tank and might have saved her if he could have seen her, but her little body hovered just below the surface, so he hurried on to look elsewhere. By the time the sheriff found her it was too late for the paramedics to revive her even though they labored over her for more than an hour. It was a cruel thing for Ouida, who hurried to the farm some 12 miles from our home upon word that Christi was missing, to have to come upon such a scene. I cannot yet bring myself to walk down to that tank even though I am often at the farm.

As a father wrote of his son, run down by a drunk driver, in the June *Reader's Digest*, I see Christi everywhere I go, for when I was home she

went with me nearly everywhere I went. She was so hyper-active and difficult to watch after that I would relieve Ouida by taking her not only on my errands but to the various city parks, including McDonald's little playground. We clocked many an hour together and I came to love her very much. Her hypertension caused a learning problem, so we had her in a special pre-school program during the last year of her life, and she was progressing, but she still could not talk, save a few words, though she understood most of what we said to her.

Ouida was convinced that our dear little one would not be able to make her way effectively in our cruel world, and on one occasion suggested that it might be an act of mercy if God should take her. But of course she did not want it that way, and she was pouring out her life so as to make the best of a difficult situation. One of our dear friends, a woman physician who often helped in diagnosing Christi's problems, agreed with Ouida that life would be very difficult for Christi. And it was *very* difficult for Ouida, especially with her aged mother to care for as well, so much so that I feared I might lose Ouida long before her time. That is why I pitched in and helped.

Ouida has no doubt that Christi has been "delivered," her word, and this is her consolation amidst the grief. And she cherishes the love affair they had. Christi would seldom give her a kiss when she asked for one, but when it was her idea she would smother Ouida's face with kisses. And she would make her early morning round from her bed to ours, climb onto Ouida's bosom and go back to sleep. It delighted her when I showed her grandmother affection in her presence. If I disturbed Ouida in the kitchen with a lusty embrace as I passed through, Christi would chuckle with delight, and if I broke the embrace sooner than she thought appropriate, she would take my hand and urge me to continue. Her delight turned into ecstasy when we would pick her up and make her the center of the embrace. We even "shaved" together, side by side, with gobs of lather!

In my almost unbearable grief I have found solace in praising God for His wisdom, goodness, and mercy, and thanking Him for teaching me more about how the kingdom of God is like a little child through Christi's visitation. If because of Christi I understand our troubled world more clearly and love suffering humanity more dearly, then she did not live her few years in vain.

Friends have been gracious and words have been comforting. Our son David, home from his ministry in Chillicothe, Mo., assisted George Massey in the funeral by reading a prayer of the late William Barclay of Glasgow, Scotland, part of which said: "Make us to be sure that in perfect widsom, perfect love, and perfect power Thou art working ever for the best." The prayer goes on: "Help us to face life with grace and gallantry; and help us to find courage to go on in the memory that the best tribute we can pay a loved one is not the tribute of tears, but the constant memory that another has been added to the unseen cloud of witnesses who compass us about."

Barclay could especially minister to me since he lost a daughter in a boating accident, along with her fiancee to whom she was soon to be married. In his *Spiritual Autobiography* he writes of this and concludes that there are three things to be said of such tragedies: (1) to understand them is impossible; (2) while Jesus does not give us solutions, he does give us the strength and help somehow to accept what we cannot understand; (3) rather than a reaction of bitter resentment and a grudge against God, one must go on living and go on working and find in the presence of Jesus Christ the strength and courage to meet life with steady eyes, and to know the comfort that God too is afflicted in my affliction.

Then there was Alexander Campbell whose precocious son Wycliffe drowned at age 12 in the mill pond on the family farm. Unlike Barclay, Campbell had to have an answer, which I now well understand. He supposed that God had need of his bright little boy in some other part of the universe, and so He took him and dispatched him accordingly. The mystery surrounding the boy's drowning lent credence to this.

But Ouida's response is the most helpful to me, reflected in that great hymn by E. L. Ashford, her favorite, which she sang to me in bed early one morning shortly after we lost Christi, all three verses.

To love someone more dearly every day,
To help a wandering child to find his way,
To ponder o'er a noble tho't and pray,
And smile when evening falls, And smile, when evening falls.
This is my task.

To follow truth as blind men long for light,
To do my best from dawn of day till night,
To keep my heart fit for His holy sight,
And answer when He calls, And answer when he calls.
This is my task.

And then my Savior by and by to meet,
When faith hath made her task on earth complete,
And lay my homage at the Master's feet,
Within the jasper walls; Within the jasper walls.
This crowns my task.

It was touching when our church on the Sunday following Christi's funeral sang this hymn to Ouida, who, like her Lord, quietly wept. — *the Editor.*

It is better to have loved and lost
Than to never have loved at all.

The Amsterdam Meeting (3)

THE NEW CHURCH

W. Carl Ketcherside

For a long time I have known that the methods being used by the organized church to save people were helpless and wholly outdated in the Space Age. They were shot down in the 1960's by the counter-culture. To continue using them is like firing a bow and arrow at persons armed with nuclear weapons. So it was over four years ago I suggested to the folk at Oak Hill Chapel that we rent a storefront in the inner city and take to the streets with our message. They did so just two months before I left for Amsterdam. During that two months I personally rang six hundred doorbells. The first morning I encountered a man freed from prison the day before, I talked with a man of the streets who was homeless, talked about Jesus with two young prostitutes, and saw several scores of older men and women, typical of the forgotten people swallowed up in the gaping naw of a huge disinterested city.

When I arrived in Amsterdam I was fine-tuned for the work and it was ready and waiting for me. I was in one of the most overtly immoral cities on the face of the modern globe. I was walking to the convention center with a group of participants from Africa the very first day. I saw a young man with a liquor bottle in his hand, staggering all over the sidewalk. I told my companions that if he was there when I came back the next day I was going to encounter him and tell him about Jesus. They suggested I had better not become involved. That night, going home, I saw him in the company of a couple of other fellows and three girls who were immodestly attired according to my standards. The police were talking to all of them so I passed on by.

But the next evening he was there with another bottle of liquor. I "peeled off" from my group and went over to him. He spoke English fluently. When I asked him about Jesus he told me he knew all about him. He had gone to a seminary for two years. He declared that Jesus was a fake. He thought he would get rid of me by using language that would have made a western mule-skinner flinch. But I hung in and presented the claims of Jesus. When he started to walk down the street I walked by his side. We came to the dive where they hung out and I started in.

He told me I could not enter but I went in anyway. I found myself in a place apparently used for vice. The pictures on the wall were the most filthily pornographic I had ever seen. Six mattresses were on the floor. Three young people who had been sitting in front of the place, got up and followed me in. I attempted to shame them and turned and walked out, but ever afterwards when I passed the place the door was closed. I saw the young former theological student three more times. He was always respectful and deferential.

I lost all fear and began to stop young people on the street and talk to them. Many of them shaved their heads except for a scalplock which they called a Mohawk. They died it red, yellow and blue. Some of them were skin-heads, openly asserting their rebellion. When I found three or four of them walking toward me in their skin-tight leather clothing. I stopped them and talked to them, always working it around to Jesus. They listened. Sometimes they would get off a smart remark but, fortunately, I could turn it to the Lord's account. It was great to be a witness as to who Jesus was and what he could do. The young brainwashed victims of the frightful "punk-rock" era heard of a love and an all-enveloping grace which they had never heard before.

On Thursday it was announced that we would attempt a penetration of the culture on Sunday, starting at noon. It was suggested that we leave our coats at home, wear no ties and unbutton the top button or two on our shirts. Sixty-four buses were lined up inside one of the convention center buildings. Beside each bus was stacked fifty box lunches. The buses were divided into red, yellow and blue. English-speaking people boarded the red, Spanish-speaking the yellow, and Far Eastern the blue. Those who spoke English were to testify on the beaches and in the resorts.

It was my good fortune to sit across from a young French Mennonite and his wife. He had been reared a nominal Catholic. After serving a term in the army he decided against war as having any possibility of settling international differences. I have heard from them twice since returning home and he is working with three small congregations numbering about twenty in French villages. We talked all the way to the battlefield where God was leading us. When the bus was several miles from the resort town and beach we encountered hundreds of cars parked four deep. The scene was a madhouse. We drove for several miles between vehicles crowded so compactly it was almost as if they were one. I have never before seen such a crowd.

A musical group had been sent about one hour in advance to soften up the people. They were all "Deutschlanders." When I arrived they were singing in the native tongue and interspersing the songs with personal declarations of what Jesus meant. The singing group was composed of about twenty people of all ages from the very young to the very old. I listened to them about five minutes and then plunged into the teeming sea of people. Out of the corner of my eye I could see my bus companions, some of them talking earnestly to two or three people. We were distributing copies of Good News by John, in the Dutch language, and urging people to read it for comfort and strength. It would be the first time many of them had been exposed to the word of the Lord.

I approached three people sitting on a bench looking out across the ocean waves. I asked them if either spoke English and found out that they could only "sprechen sie Deutsch." I had my work cut out for me. By signs and an occasional word from my limited vocabulary I got through to them. They promised to read the book that night. I gave them two copies, and moved over to where eight people were sitting on a hotel porch enjoying the ocean breeze. I asked if anyone in the group spoke English. One man raised his hand. I asked him to interpret what I was going to say and began to speak. No sooner had I started than Satan interfered in the form of an aging dowager, who deliberately arose, took a stance directly between me and the interpreter and began to talk to him in a loud voice. I got only four of the people to accept a copy of the book.

I moved on to a set of steps where a young man and woman were sitting. I introduced myself and found they were from Haarlem, a few miles away. He was a housepainter but was unemployed. Conditions are bad in the Netherlands for the trades. I talked with them about fifteen minutes about Jesus. I have never found a more alert or inviting couple. They asked questions about the Way. We exchanged addresses and I moved on. Before me was a motorcycle gang from all over northern Europe. There were well over a hundred of them. All were dressed uniformly in black leather suits. I moved in among the Hondas and Suzukis and began to preach about Jesus in a conversational tone. They gathered around. I offered the books to anyone who would promise to read them. Five boys and girls reached out for them. I gave the books with a prayer and started walking down the street.

I had one copy of the Gospel of John remaining. I met two women walking toward me, stopped them, told them what I was doing, and found that one of them was from Ireland. The other was her sister and lived in West Germany. They were awaiting their brother who would join them from France on the morrow. Exacting a promise from them to take turns reading the book I gave the last one to them and turned my steps toward where the bus was due to pick us up after three hours of absence while we were contacting people. It was a thrilling afternoon and I prayed on the bus and again that night for those whom I had met. I could hardly wait to get back to the United States and do the same thing here. — *139 Signal Hill Dr., St. Louis 63121*

Sow a thought, reap an act;
Sow an act, reap a habit;
Sow a habit, reap a life;
Sow a life, reap a destiny.

BOOK NOTES

Christian Doctrine: The Faith Once Delivered, edited by William J. Richardson of Emmanuel School of Religion and published by Christian Standard, contains 18 chapters, two of which are by Leroy Garrett, one on the nature of faith and the other on the nature of the apostolic message. Other writers are Robert O. Fife, Fred P. Thompson, Jr., and Knofel Staton. You will find all the chapters rich in information. 10.50 postpaid.

The Family and the Fellowship by Ralph P. Martin of Fuller Seminary is a study of the church that will encourage you. It defends the place of the church, despite its imperfections, as within God's purpose, and does this through various New Testament images of the church. You will find the chapter on "Charismatic Gifts: Who Needs Them?" informative, and the chapter on whether the church will ever be one provocative. Anything Martin writes is worth one's time and this little volume is no exception, being crisp and informative. 5:50 postpaid.

The Lausanne Covenant, 1974, included an affirmation of concerned believers that in view of world-wide poverty they would covenant themselves to a simple lifestyle, even though they live in affluent circumstances, in order to contribute generously to both relief and evangelism. In response to this Ronald J. Sider has edited *Living More Simply*, in which 23 individuals and families tell us how to live more simply. The 39 suggestions by the Mennonite Central Committee, such as "Buy small cars" and "Stop shopping for recreation," may be the most practical. 5.50 postpaid.

All lovers of William Barclay will want a copy of his authorized biography by Clive Rawlins. A hardbound volume of nearly 800 pages, it has to sell for 29.95 postpaid, but it is a veritable storehouse of information, not only about Barclay, but about the stormy times in which he lived. The chapter on "The Crucible of Suffering" tells the grim story of his daughter and her finance being lost at sea and the devastating effect it had on the Barclays. While Barclay submerged his grief in work, his wife was inconsolable to the point of threatening the stability of their home. Barclay was driven to the extreme of having to insist that his daughter's name never be mentioned again. The biographer shows how this sensitive man, always "a man of the people." became the most widely read Bible expositor in modern times.

The Stone-Campbell Movement by Leroy Garrett recently received acclaim in *The Australian Christian,* published by Christian Churches in that country. The editor encouraged his readers to read this history if they want to understand what happened to that Movement that intended to unite the Christians in all the sects. If you want a copy, we will send you one for 21.95, and we pay the postage if you pay in advance. Or you can get up a club of eight new subs or renewals at 3.00 per name per year (24.00 total) and we will send you a copy of the book free of charge.

OUR CHANGING WORLD

There are some sobering statistics relative to the future of the world for those of us concerned about the mission of the church. The present population of the world is 4.2 billion. The lowest estimate for the year 2000 (less than 16 years ahead) is 6 billion. The highest is 8.5 billion. Going by the lowest estimate, the non-Christian population will be 4.5 billion, more than the present population. By the year 2000 there will be, at present trends, twice as many hungry people in the world than at the present time. Presently 40,000 people starve to death every day or die of malnutrition. If we look at but one country, India is expected to reach a population of *one billion* by 1992, just eight years away. Calcutta alone will have sixty million people huddled together in hungry agony. One organization that does an effective work toward feeding the hungry masses is: Food for the Hungry, Box E, Scottsdale, AZ 85252.

Another worthwhile effort that Ouida and I support is the National Federation for Decency, conducted by Donald E. Wildmon, which is enjoying phenomenal success in